Studies: Timely Referral to Palliative Care Team Improves Quality of Life

from Indian Journal of Palliative Care

“Dealing with symptoms of any painful or serious or life-limiting illness is a challenging task for any health care professional. Palliative care provides an answer and has a vital role to play in the management of such of those patients whose very existence is under a serious threat, which may well be compounded by pain and other distressing symptoms. Palliative care is a comprehensive care, tailored to cater to the individual patient’s needs and works in synergy with the primary treatment the patient is receiving... Palliative care provides emotional support not only to the patient, but also to his family and helps in opening up discussions about disease-related treatment choices and management of symptoms related to it.

Palliative care helps the patient and the family to communicate better with each other and with health care professionals. It helps them identify the priorities and set goals for the future that can lead to a meaningful, satisfactory life for both the patient and themselves. Studies reveal that palliative care ensures care more in line with patients’ wishes and meets emotional and spiritual needs of the patient... To provide a reasonable and meaningful quality of life (QOL) is the central theme of palliative care. The domains included in health-related QOL are physical function, symptom distress, family well being, emotional well being, social function, and spiritual satisfaction. The other areas that could be focused on are the financial impact of disease, sexual function, body image concerns, and spirituality crisis...

Doctors find it difficult to make early referrals to palliative care for many reasons. These include being unsure of the disease process, possibility of periods of remission, inadequate communication skill, lack of knowledge about palliative care, lack of support, time, and lack of team accessibility...

Some recent comments from families of patients who died without being referred to palliative care teams or referred late:

- Much of the misery could have been lessened had someone been there to address the physical and emotional aspects of the disease from the very diagnosis of the disease. It seems logical that less pain and stress would have led to improved QOL.
- Early integrated palliative care could have helped patients live longer.
- Majority of families preferred an earlier consultation.”

These excerpts are taken from P. Saraswathi Devi’s article, “A Timely Referral to Palliative Care Team Improves Quality of Life” in Indian Journal of Palliative Care. You can see the whole article, as well as links to cited studies, here.

To learn more, please join us for Health Care Theater on June 20 focusing on the topic of Palliative Care Consults. See below for details.

Health Care Theater

This monthly program provides a forum for MUSC care team members to debrief difficult cases and share strategies to support families, colleagues, and themselves. One (1) hour of Diversity Education training will be provided.

Participants must register via MyQuest.

Overcoming Barriers to Palliative Care Consults

June 20, 2018  1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
Main Hospital: 2 West Classroom

Palliative care seeks to improve quality of life for patients with life-threatening illnesses, through prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification, assessment and treatment of pain and other problems. Come learn about when to reach out to the Palliative Care team.

Establishing Inclusive Partnerships with LGBTQ Patients

July 25, 2018  1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
ART: 1st floor Auditorium

This program will discuss how heterosexism and homophobia impact patient experience and perpetuate healthcare disparities in LGBTQ patients.
Get to Know a Chaplain

In each issue, we will focus on a different member of MUSC Pastoral Care team.

Came to MUSC in: 2002

Hometown: Ravenel, SC

Education and training: Bachelor of Science from Charleston Southern University ("back when it was Baptist College"); Master of Divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Clinical Pastoral Education in Savannah, GA.

As a chaplain, what do you bring to the MUSC team? “Compassion to accompany patients, families, and staff in this thing we call life.”

What do you do to relax? “Take walks with my husband and our dog.”

What is one thing you wish people knew about chaplains that most don’t? “Chaplains interact with interfaith community leaders to bring quality pastoral care to patients and families.”

Interesting/fun fact about you: “I have four great-nieces and three great-nephews.”

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Blessing the Hands That Serve

by Chaplain Stacy S. Lawton

As part of Nurses’ Week and Employee Appreciation Week this year, the chaplains offered an interfaith Blessing of the Hands on Tuesday, May 8th. Over 130 staff members participated. This was a very meaningful time for everyone involved.

All of us who are part of the MUSC team do such important work with our hands, whether they are performing surgery, administering medicine, preparing food, typing reports, cleaning floors, or offering a comforting touch to those in distress.

Seeing the positive response from everyone who was able to participate, the Pastoral Care team has decided to expand this service as part of this year’s Pastoral Care Week, October 21st through 27th. We will offer several time slots for team members to stop by the hospital chapels for a blessing throughout the week, as well as doing “mobile blessings” for different departments and areas of MUSC Health. Be on the lookout for more information as we get closer to that time, especially in the October-November issue of Caring Spirit!

During the service, we used this short prayer written by Colette M. Pierson. May it be a blessing to you today.

“Blessed be these hands that have touched life. Blessed be these hands that have felt pain. Blessed be these hands that have embraced with compassion. Blessed be these hands that have offered healing. Blessed be these hands that have drawn blood, administered medicine, made progress notes, and dealt with difficult situations. Blessed be these hands that have welcomed and guided those anxious about their future. Blessed be our hands, for they are the work of God’s hands. Amen.”

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Chaplains are available 24/7/365

Contact Chaplains at MUSC | Main Hospital pager #18089 | Ashley River Tower (ART) pager #17265 | Chaplain Services – 24/7/365